Vedanta and the Social Problems in the World

One morning the session was enlivened by the visit of a well-known social and political figure, whose presence, whenever he visits Shri Maharaj, generally makes for a good-humoured but lively discussion as to whether Vedanta and the practical life in the world could go together: were they complementary or were they contrary to each other?!

The visitor was not only not unfamiliar with Shri Maharaj's teaching but had imbibed it sincerely, but one presumes that once in a while his basic nature and proclivity towards social work and social problems would give him a feeling of uncertainty. And then, he would come to Shri Maharaj for a quick refresher course. Add to it his intense love for Shri Maharaj, and it would seem that he suddenly makes up his mind to pay Shri Maharaj a quick visit, gets into his station wagon and drives down the distance of 100 miles to Bombay.

The basic question: can a man honestly afford to spend his time absorbed in meditation of the Self, to the exclusion of the many social and political problems in the country — and the world?!

The most refreshing part of Shri Maharaj's talk is his approach to the problem: forget the many conceptual jungle that quickly grows around any theme and also the traditional literature and thinking about it, and get down to the fundamentals. Forget what such and such a well-known personality might have said, however famous he may be, or might have been. Let us deal with the matter — you and I — NOW. How many brilliant personalities — avataars — there have been in the last, say, two thousand years, or ten thousand years? Each one of them has laid down his own list of 'Do's and 'Don't's, depending on his own concept and the needs of the time, as he saw them. So far so good, let us not doubt either his sincerity or his capacity. But let us also ask ourselves: what have all these

avatars achieved? Have they been able to make the slightest change in the behaviour of ~~that~~ Man or Nature? There must be some reason – some essential basic reason – why they have not been successful at all. What is the reason? Could it be that the problem itself was misconceived, or misperceived? Could it be that attacking the problem directly was like attacking the Hydra heads of a Hydra, which when cut off were replaced ~~by~~ instantly by others? and that the proper way is to locate and attack the very heart of the Hydra?

Now what are the basic ingredients of any social or political or economic or any other problem? I said basic ingredients: reduce them to the basic essentials, and what do we find? The essentials are: Me, You (representing the ~~total~~ other ~~total~~ millions of people) and the physical world! If you analyse these three ingredients, what are they? all "Me"s and "you"s and the earth, the sky, the moon and the stars – ARE THEY NOT CONCEPTUAL IMAGES IN ~~THE~~ CONSCIOUSNESS? All existence is objective: all 'Me's and 'You's exist as one another's objects, only in that consciousness that cognizes them. and so far as the "world" or "universe" is concerned, is it ~~essentially~~ in essence any different from the ~~dream~~ world which you create in your dreams? – or, more accurately, the world that gets created in your consciousness, made of the same ingredients and inhabited by the same kind of people – including yourself – as in what you call the real world? Your "real" world, you might say, has been existing a long long time before you – well, in your dreams world time are seas and mountains and buildings which have also obviously been existing a long, long time before you dreamt it up? How are you going to solve the many social and political problems of those people in your dream?

Is it not ~~so~~ therefore true that the heart of the hydra – the root of the problem – is

CONSCIOUSNESS in which the entire manifested universe appears? Indeed, is not consciousness the Hydra itself? And is it not the consciousness on which the attention should be directed? - what is its nature, the cause of its appearance, and other relevant factors? If it is consciousness on which the entire phenomenal world APPEARS, then such manifestation can become sensorially perceptible only if it is extended spatially and for a certain duration of time. One must therefore necessarily accept the purely conceptual existence of space-time the psychic apparatus of space-time as a pre-requisite for the perception of the manifested universe.

This leads us to the following conclusions :-

a) Without the concept of space-time the manifested universe would not be sensorially perceptible; and, therefore, all events based on cause and effect, and extended in space-time must also be only conceptual;

b) If the manifested universe is only an appearance - and in the absence of consciousness, the universe does not exist on its own - then the manifested universe is the appearance of something that is present on its own right as ∓;

c) Phenomenon, then, is the objective aspect of Noumenon, the total potentiality: the totality of the known in the infinity of the unknown ∓; mind cannot be used to transcend mind, and therefore, the abstract of mind - Noumenon - represents the outside limit of cognition.

d) Noumenon - THAT-WHICH-IS - can only BE, and IT can only BE, NOW. (Space-time) In the absence of the conceptual space-time, there can be absolutely no 'where' for any 'thing' to be.

Now that we see that the "world" in which problems were to be solved is only an appearance, let us get back to the 'you's and 'I's who are supposed to solve these problems. Before we start to

identify and then proceed to solve the world's problems, should we not identify ourselves.

We are, relatively, sentient beings and we want to do something to solve the problems in the world. Whatever may seem to be, is it possible for a sentient being to do anything other than conceptual? What do we do from morning to night - except during deep sleep - other than continuously objectivising? And what is the human body - actually, nothing but a psycho-somatic apparatus - capable of doing? Nothing other than producing illusory images and interpretations. Whatever we may think of ourselves - and this keeps on changing from time to time and there is nothing stable about it - cannot but be an integral part of the total manifestation and cannot in any manner be apart from it. One is better able to comprehend this in the case of a dream which we can review after waking up: what appears as ourselves in the dream, with an independent identity and working, are clearly seen, in a review after waking, to be totally devoid of any independent action at all and is are merely puppets being manipulated. Is it any different really in the world which we think of as real? We dream that we are awake, we dream that we are asleep - and all the time life is being lived: all a product of the dreaming mind, objectivisation going on in Consciousness in which it takes place. And consciousness itself is only a concept which comes like an eclipse on the noumenon for a certain length of time.

If the position is appreciated directly, then we know that ~~that~~ we are the Conscious Presence, the animating consciousness and not the phenomenal object to which it gives sentience. When we see the false as false, the problem resolves itself.